Canadian Community Health Survey

topics

Cycle 2.1 Report 2

Physical Activity in Nova Scotia

January 2005

The Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) is a new series of health surveys being conducted by Statistics Canada. Its purpose is to provide regular and timely cross-sectional estimates of health determinants, health status, and health system utilization for 133 health regions across the country. Data from the second installment of the CCHS (Cycle 2.1) was collected between January and December 2003 and was released in June 2004.

"Physical Activity in Nova Scotia" is the second in a series of reports from CCHS Cycle 2.1, providing an in-depth look at thematic CCHS data.

Highlights

- About half (49 percent) of Nova Scotians aged 12 and over report being physically active or moderately active.
- Physical activity level declines with age.
- People's self-reported activity level increases with their self-perceived health.
- Physically active people are less likely to suffer from chronic conditions.
- Smokers are less likely to report being physically active.

NOVA SCOTIA
Health

106-05409/

Physical Activity and the CCHS

Being physically active[1] is defined in the CCHS as having an average daily energy expenditure of 3.0+ kilocalories per kilogram of bodyweight (KKD). Health Canada reports that this is the level of exercise required for cardiovascular health benefits. Someone who weighs 200 pounds would require about 30 minutes of brisk walking a day to maintain this level of energy expenditure. Moderate physical activity is defined as expending an average of between 1.5 and 2.9 kilocalories per kilogram of weight per day. People who report activity levels leading to an average daily energy expenditure of less than 1.5 KKD (a level of activity too low to offer substantial health benefits) are considered to be physically inactive.

Energy expenditure in the CCHS is estimated from the responses given to a series of questions pertaining to the types of activities respondents participate in, as well as the lengths of time they spend engaged in these activities. The Physical Activity Index (PAI) separates ranges of energy expenditure into the aforementioned categories: active, moderately active, and inactive.

Who is Physically Active?

Twenty-five percent of Nova Scotians aged 12 and over report that they are regularly active, and another 24 percent report they are moderately active. About half (51%) of Nova Scotians consider themselves to be physically inactive (Figure 1). These rates are similar for both rural and urban areas of the province.

Compared to the estimates reported by CCHS 1.1, Nova Scotians' physical activity levels have been improved, with more people reporting being active or moderately active and less people reporting being inactive (Table 1).

However, the situation around activity level among Nova Scotians remains discouraging with the majority of the population (51%) being inactive and only 25% meeting a minimum activity level to have some cardiovascular health benefits.

FIGURE 1 Physical Activity Levels, Nova Scotia (CCHS 2.1)

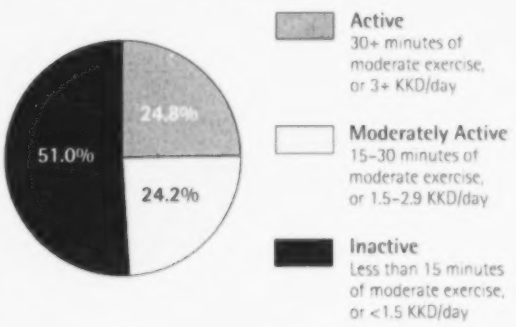


Table 1 Percent of Physical Activity Levels—CCHS 1.1 vs. CCHS 2.1

	CCHS 1.1	CCHS 2.1	Percent Change
Active	22%	25%	+14%
Moderately Active	23%	24%	+4%
Inactive	55%	51%	-7%

Activity level declines with age. Seventy-one percent of Nova Scotians aged 12 to 19 report being physically active or moderately active, which is up slightly from 67% in CCHS 1.1; among those aged 20 to 44, 51 percent report being physically active or moderately active, which is also up from 48% in CCHS 1.1. The rate of being physically active and moderately active declines to 41 percent for people aged 45 to 64 (unchanged from CCHS 1.1) and, again to 32 percent for those aged 65 and over (up from 25% in CCHS 1.1) (Figure 2). This trend is similar for both men and women.

The prevalence of physical activity among Nova Scotians increases with income level (Figure 3). The percentage of people who report being physically active or moderately active increases from 37 percent for those in the lowest income group to 53 percent for those in the highest

income group. Nova Scotians in the highest income category are significantly more active than those in all other income categories. This has implications for healthy public policy suggesting that public investment in physical activity infrastructure and opportunity may be needed to level the playing field for those who are economically disadvantaged allowing them to become more physically active.

FIGURE 2 Percent Physically Active or Moderately Active by Age and Sex, Nova Scotia (CCHS 2.1)

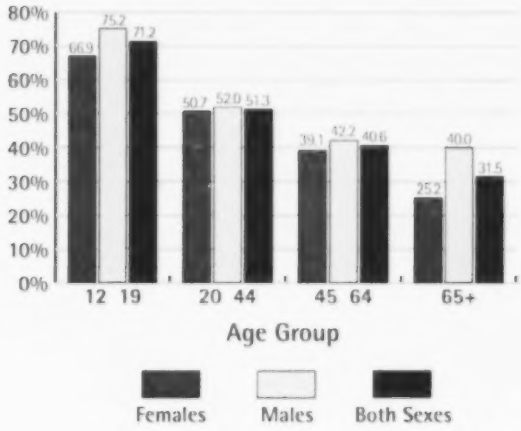
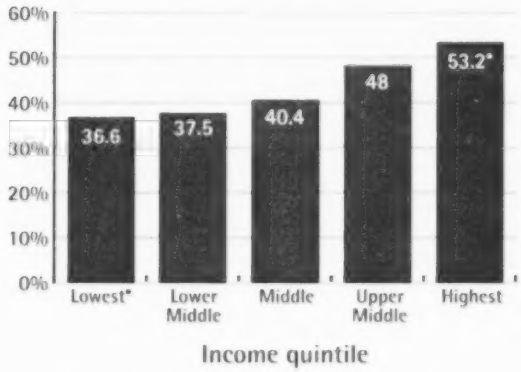


FIGURE 3 Percent Physically Active or Moderately Active by Income, Nova Scotia (CCHS 2.1)



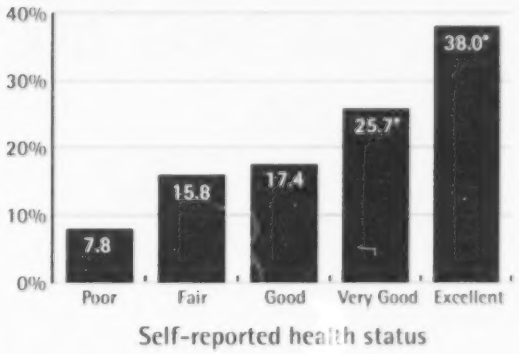
* Significantly different from all other income groups.

Unlike in CCHS 1.1, the prevalence of being physically active was not found to be significantly different among various education levels in CCHS 2.1.

Why be Physically Active?

Daily physical activity is important to one's health. Nova Scotians' self-reported activity level increases with their self-reported health status (Figure 4). Among those who rate their health as excellent, 38 percent also report being physically active; while among those who consider their health status as poor, a significantly smaller percentage (8%) also report being physically active. It is important to note that these figures reflect respondents' perceptions of their own health, and not their actual health status. It should also be noted that the differences in physical activity levels is not the only factor attributed to the differences in self-perceived health. Some poor health behaviors, for example smoking and drinking, are related to physical activity levels and may also influence people's self-perceived health.

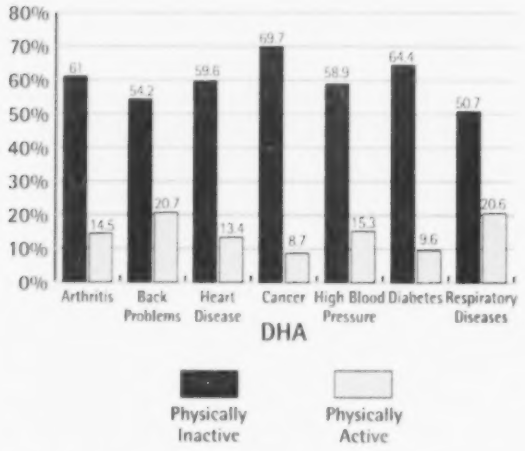
FIGURE 4 Percent Physically Active by Self-reported Health Status, Nova Scotia (CCHS 2.1)



* Significantly different from their lower levels.

By comparing the rates of chronic conditions between physically active (active and moderately active) and inactive respondents, we can get a sense of the relationship between physical activity and health (Figure 5). The most common chronic conditions are significantly more prevalent among Nova Scotians who report their physical activity level to be inactive. Such specific conditions include arthritis, back problems, heart diseases, cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, and respiratory diseases. Activity levels and having a chronic condition may be "co-dependent variables" whereas inactivity increases the likelihood of developing a chronic condition, having a chronic condition may also increases the likelihood of being inactive.

FIGURE 5 Percent of Selected Chronic Conditions by Activity Level, Nova Scotia (CCHS 2.1)

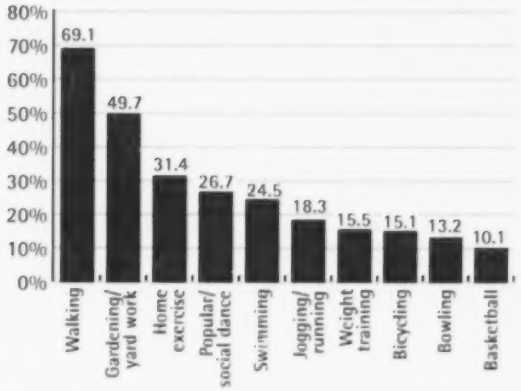


Significant difference is reported between active and inactive for all chronic conditions.

Most Reported Physical Activities of Nova Scotians

Walking for exercise is the most reported physical activity of Nova Scotians, followed by gardening or yard work. Sixty-nine percent of Nova Scotians report having walked for exercise in the past three months, and fifty percent of Nova Scotians report having done gardening or yard work in the past three months. Other popular physical activities among Nova Scotians include home exercise (31%), popular or social dance (27%), swimming (25%), jogging or running (18%), weight-training (16%), bicycling (15%), bowling (13%), and basketball (10%) (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6 Popular Physical Activities of Nova Scotians (CCHS 2.1)



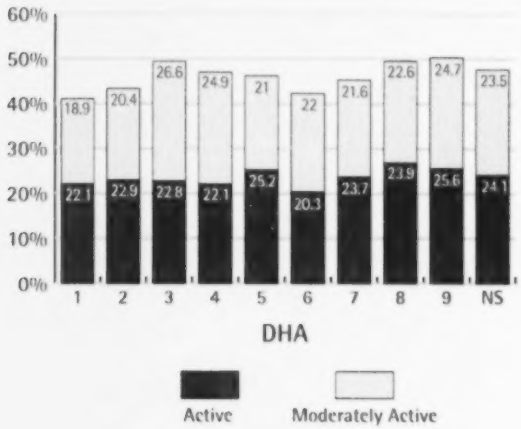
Physical Activity and Smoking

The percentage of non-smokers who report being physically active or moderately active is significantly higher than that of smokers (50% and 41% respectively). This illustrates the correlation between poor health behaviors discussed in the previous section of this report. Health Canada warns that physical inactivity is as detrimental to one's health as is smoking.

Physical Activity in the DHAs

Although differences appear in levels of physical activity across DHAs, these differences are not statistically significant (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7 Physical Activity in the DHAs, Nova Scotia (CCHS 2.1)



Additional Resources

This document was prepared by the Information Analysis and Reporting, Information Management Branch of the Nova Scotia Department of Health. For additional information on the data included in this report, please contact us at (902) 424-8291.

Copies of this report are available on line at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/health/reports.htm>. Click on "Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)" for copies of this and other reports in the series.

Note

1. Definitions of physical activity used in the CCHS are consistent with those used in the National Population Health Survey (NPHS), also conducted by Statistics Canada.

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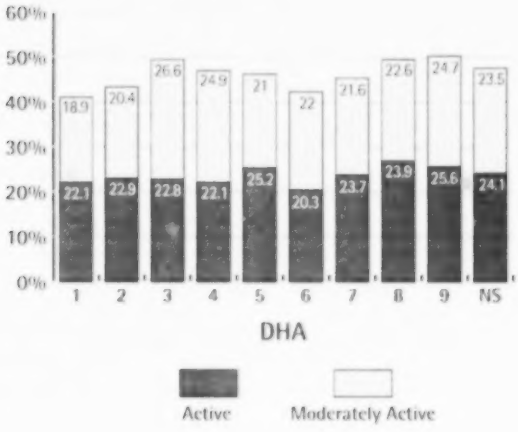

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